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INFORMATION REPORT

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General

1. The announcement of the trial and execution of Viktor Semenovich Abakumov is a propaganda move by the Soviet leaders consistent with the propaganda trend of the last two years. The facts in the indictment are wholly without foundation and, in many cases, the direct opposite of the truth. In publicizing this event, the regime is attempting to persuade the Soviet people that it is a different type of regime from that of Stalin, that it is genuinely concerned with the people's welfare, and that it will not allow arbitrary arrest or false accusations by the security services. Yet the present reemphasis on Stalin's role as continuer of Lenin's cause is more indicative of the truth: the present leaders, schooled under Stalin, are like him in being cruel and arbitrary, unconcerned with the people's welfare when it suits their purpose, and intent upon expanding their power within and without the Soviet Union.

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Indictment

2. [redacted] evaluation of the indictment of Abakumov which appeared in the December 24 issue of Pravda:

"The defendant Abakumov, who was appointed by Beriya to the post of USSR Minister of State Security, participated directly in the criminal group of plotters, and carried out for Beriya perfidious tasks directed against the Communist Party and the Soviet Government."

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- a. That Abakumov was appointed as minister by Beriya is untrue, despite the

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fact that Abakumov had at one time been deputy to Beriya when the latter was chief of the NKVD. Abakumov was appointed Minister of the MGB by Stalin approximately in April-May of 1946, on the day that the People's Commissariats became Ministries. Although Beriya was forced to accede to Stalin's wishes in this matter, Abakumov was not helped by Beriya to this position nor can he be considered a protege of Beriya. On the day the appointment was made, several persons, including Beriya, were present in Stalin's office when the subject of appointment of a minister of the MGB was under discussion. Stalin raised a pencil and slowly and deliberately lowered it to the list of names before him. Indicating Abakumov, he said, "And he shall be the minister".

Stalin then looked over at Beriya. Beriya appeared to think for a moment and then nodded. Proof that Abakumov was not Beriya's protege can be found in the fact that, after Abakumov became minister, he issued a long order to all the operational workers in which he viciously criticized the former Minister Merkulov, accusing him of sabotaging the work of the MGB, of being inefficient in the proper conduct of operations, of making improper use of personnel, and of playing favorites within the MGB. Furthermore, Abakumov successfully removed all of the higher officials who previously had worked under Merkulov: for example, the two Kobulov brothers and Meshik, among others. When it is recalled that Merkulov was a personal friend of Beriya during the whole of his life and that Merkulov, the Kobulov brothers, and Meshik were shot along with Beriya, one must conclude that Beriya would not have appointed Abakumov as Minister of the MGB. 25X1

- b. Nor could Abakumov have been a direct accomplice of the criminal conspiracy group, carrying out wrecking assignments given him by Beriya. Abakumov was in jail at the time that Beriya was arrested and until after his execution and probably did not even know that Beriya had been arrested. Therefore, he could not have been an accomplice to Beriya's actions.
- c. Approximately two or three months after Abakumov's arrest, an edict was read at a meeting of the Party Aktiv of the MGB concerning Abakumov's crimes. One of the signatories of this edict was Malenkov. Briefly, it stated that an investigation by the Central Committee of the VKP (b) had disclosed that the present situation and the past work of the MGB were unsatisfactory, that Abakumov was morally degenerate, and that he carried on acts with the purpose of undermining the authority of the USSR. He was accused of being near-sighted, inefficient in operations, and not giving proper direction to work under his supervision. It further stated, without specifying, that Abakumov and other members of the MGB had not become cognizant that some of the enemy elements in the USSR had attempted to create diversionary and terrorist acts against the leaders of the Communist Party, the Soviet Government, and the Soviet Army. After the meeting, each chief of a section (otdel) gathered his subordinates and explained to them that this charge referred to the case of the doctors who had attempted to poison Stalin, Malenkov, Beriya, and others.

3. The indictment continues:

"Committing the same crimes as Beriya, Abakumov took the path of adventures and political provocations. Abakumov fabricated cases against individual workers of the Party and Soviet apparatus and representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia; then he arrested these persons, making use of the criminal methods of investigation prohibited by Soviet law, jointly with his associates A.G. Leonov, V.I. Komarov, and M.T. Likhachev, and obtained from those arrested untrue statements and confessions of their guilt in serious crimes against the State."

Actually, it must be stated that Abakumov was arrested because he would not take the path of adventure and political provocations. Although the indictment states that he obtained confessions from those falsely arrested and tortured, the truth, as stated in the edict read after his arrest, was that he was unable to get confessions and that actually he received no confessions from anyone. One must read between the lines of the indictment: contrary to what is being said in the indictment, the Government actually accused Abakumov, Leonov, Komarov and

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Likhachev of very inadequately beating and torturing their prisoners. After Ryumin was appointed by Stalin as an MGB deputy chief, member of the MGB collegium, and chief of the Section for the Investigation of Especially Important Affairs, very few of the doctors in the Doctors' Plot left jail in good health as a result of the interrogations used. The fact that Abakumov was inefficient in the eyes of the Kremlin and was not cruel enough in his treatment of the prisoners is shown by the dispatch of special experts from the Central Committee to investigate the doctors' case. Abakumov was too intelligent a man to allow himself to be drawn into these plots.

4. Another point in the indictment was:

"By such means Abakumov falsified the so-called 'Leningrad Case' in which a number of Party and administrative workers were groundlessly arrested and falsely accused of serious State crimes."

- a. The Leningrad case, itself, has been brought before the public at this time for the following reasons: the Soviet Government, at this time, is going through a crisis and is attempting by various means to raise its own prestige not only in the eyes of the Soviet citizen, but even in the eyes of the Soviet Government and of Party officials of the highest echelons. This part of the indictment seems to wish to point out that Beriia and Abakumov were actually "vagabonds", who continually arrested and condemned all sorts of innocent persons. The present government, however, is attempting to appear different. They are saying, "Look, we are investigating the past and releasing innocent victims; you can trust us!"
- b. "The Leningrad Case" can only refer to the purges which took place in Leningrad in 1949-50. It is extremely unlikely that any Soviet citizen would be inclined to interpret the "Leningrad Case" as referring to the situation involving the Party Central Committee decree of August 1946 on the Leningrad literary journals Zvezda and Leningrad. However, very few Soviet citizens knew what had happened in Leningrad in 1949. In fact, very few people outside of Leningrad will even connect the present reference to the Leningrad case with the happenings in Leningrad in 1949.
- c. Abakumov's role in the events in Leningrad in 1949 was restricted to his personally arresting N.A. Voznesenskiy. He acted here as an instrument of the Central Committee and not on his own. Stalin had become suspicious of the Leningrad group—A.A. Kuznetsov, Voznesenskiy, M.I. Rodionov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, and P.S. Popkov, all political appointees of A.A. Zhdanov—because they had suggested that Leningrad be made the capital of the RSFSR. They had also suggested that a Ministry of State Security be established under the RSFSR.¹ Stalin accused Voznesenskiy and Kuznetsov of attempting to create a Russian Federation with its headquarters at Leningrad which would be against the best interest of the USSR, since Leningrad had historic associations with the Russian empire. Stalin had a constant fear that Great Russians were attempting to replace him because he was a Georgian.
- d. Voznesenskiy was arrested by Abakumov, and Kuznetsov was arrested by one of Abakumov's deputies. A rumor was circulated among the people in the USSR that Voznesenskiy had been only removed from his position as head of GosPlan and was at home writing a book on economics. It was rumored that Kuznetsov had done something incorrectly and had been sent to Khabarovsk as a secretary of the Khabarovsk regional committee. However, members of the MGB knew that the two were actually incarcerated in an inner jail. Soon after the arrest of Voznesenskiy and Abakumov, there was a general purge throughout the MGB in Leningrad involving chiefs of sections and higher. The purge was known in Leningrad and Moscow through rumors and through talk by MGB workers at home. Along the periphery and in the inland country, however, nothing was known about the situation. About two or three months after the arrests, rumors circulated that Voznesenskiy and Kuznetsov had been executed.

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the rumor was true.
About this time Popkov was arrested; however, nothing was ever known of his fate.

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- e. It was later officially stated among Party workers that Kuznetsov and five Leningrad officials had been accused of falsifying the results of elections in the Leningrad Obpartkom and Gorpartkom in 1949. Popkov was up for re-election as First Secretary and Kuznetsov was up for election to the Leningrad Oblast Committee. Several voters cast ballots against the entire slate, but the commission certifying the election felt that it would look more proper if the election was unanimous. They took their problem to Kuznetsov, who told them that it was their affair, thus indirectly countenancing the falsification. One of those who had voted against the slate then wrote to Stalin informing him that the election had not been unanimous. Stalin used this charge as the basis for the arrests which followed. Kuznetsov had attended the election as Party representative from the center and was held doubly responsible for the falsification.

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- f. [redacted] Malenkov's actual role in the Leningrad purge [redacted] he must have played a leading part, since he was at that time a secretary of the Central Committee and he was trusted by Stalin. Although Malenkov probably knew exactly what was going on in Leningrad, he was afraid to use it against his enemies and to inform Stalin fully. Malenkov probably was wary of Stalin's capriciousness, fearing that the affair, if fully explained, might redound on him. Malenkov and Beriya may have made a trip to Leningrad at this time. [redacted] relationship between Malenkov and V.M. Andriyanov, who replaced Popkov as First Secretary in Leningrad, [redacted] Malenkov certainly sanctioned his appointment.

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5. The indictment further said:

"At the trial, there were also established many other instances of fabrication of criminal cases and a criminal treading under foot of Socialist law by Abakumov and his confederates. Now the people who were falsely accused by Abakumov and his confederates have been fully rehabilitated."

In this section, the Soviet Government is attempting to show its subordinates how humane it is, to give to those now in prisons some hope that their cases may also be investigated and that they may be freed. However, this is, of course, only a false hope. A certain number of Party workers have been released, but the majority of those arrested who have in the past openly criticized the Soviet Government will probably never get out of jail. [redacted] no important personalities will be released, since these prisoners are in prison by order of the present Government and it would be impossible for the blame for their arrests to be put on Abakumov.

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6. Finally, the indictment said:

"In order to conceal the crimes committed by him, Abakumov prohibited the transmittal to appropriate quarters of the statements and complaints of the arrested persons, addressed to the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Soviet Government."

- a. The above accusation refers to the certain percentage of complaints stating that individuals were poorly fed, poorly treated, and beaten. All such complaints are controlled by the MGB and never reach the Central Committee. Whenever such a complaint reached Abakumov himself, he would severely punish those responsible and would issue orders to the department concerned to mend its ways. However, those punished were few and far between, and only in sufficient numbers to show a superficial humanity. The majority of complaints addressed to the Central Committee were returned the next day by the "bagful" to the MGB for research. No one in the Central Committee ever looked at them. If, at any time, some complaint, through personal connections, reached one of

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the leaders of the Government or the Politburo, it would also be returned to the MGB with the following notation: "Chief of the Molotov security area to the Minister of the MGB: This complaint is directed to your attention for your action". Nothing more.

- b. Concerning the men tried along with Abakumov [redacted] 25X1
 [redacted] Leonov [redacted] was a major general, 25X1
 [redacted] Concerning I.A. Chernov and Broverman, [redacted] 25X1
 [redacted] Chernov, during the period that Abakumov 25X1
 was minister, was chief of the MGB Secretariat with the rank of colonel. He was not arrested at the same time as Abakumov. Ignatyev removed him from his position because he had been chief under Abakumov and it would have been embarrassing to retain him in this position. Chernov remained unemployed for several months after his removal. Chernov was later transferred into some Moscow directorate, that is, either in the MGB in Moscow or in the counterintelligence of the Moscow Military Okrug.
- c. Broverman was Chernov's deputy, with the rank of lieutenant colonel. [redacted] 25X1
 [redacted] Broverman was another Beriya, in the sense that he was 25X1
 extremely intelligent as was Beriya. Broverman's job was to write and compile reports for Abakumov, as well as all speeches and orders. In other words, he carried on all the functions of the minister and Abakumov only signed the papers prepared by Broverman. After Abakumov's arrest, Broverman was not arrested and worked as deputy chief of a section of the MGB in Moscow. [redacted] up to March 1953 Broverman had not been 25X1
 arrested and continued to work in this job.

Conclusions

7. Abakumov had been arrested and was shot at the present time because, as Minister of the MGB, he was the most efficient and intelligent one in the history of the USSR. He was shot because he had had free access to Stalin, because he had had audio-surveillance put on the houses of all the members of the Politburo and all marshals of the Soviet Union. As a result, Abakumov was well acquainted with all the doings of the Communist Party and therefore had become the worst enemy of its leaders.
8. Publicity was given the trial and execution in accordance with the propaganda line of the last two years. The present emphasis upon people's rights and upon coexistence is indicative of the present weakness of the Soviet Government. Coexistence is an absurdity [redacted] Ten years ago there would never 25X1
 have been any talk of it. [redacted] 25X1
 [redacted] Communism has begun to crack 25X1
 and will continue to crack for some time. For example, the satellites have begun to build socialism in their countries but nothing has come of it. Their standard of living has considerably decreased in the period under question.
9. It is very difficult for anyone who has not lived in the Soviet Union to understand the whole system of agriculture, industry, and life in general. The majority of the people in the Soviet Union do not believe what is in the papers. They have been so flooded with propaganda that they no longer pay any attention to it. The newspapers are useful for only a few things, such as wrapping fish.
10. As an example of the distrust the ordinary citizen would have of the daily press, [redacted] an article in a current Pravda concerning the "Tremendous Growth of 25X1
 Consumer Items". Articles such as this have been appearing this year and the 25X1
 year before this and the year before that. [redacted] 25X1
 [redacted] 25X1
 [redacted] The Soviet Government also attempted to deceive the public by 25X1
 means of spreading rumors. In the summer of 1953, there was a lecture on the growth of material wealth in the USSR which stated that the Soviet Government had

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purchased all of the future grape harvests [] and that plans were being developed on methods for storing these grapes. Other rumors had it that the Soviet Government was arranging to purchase all the velvet products [] or a large amount of wool [] or a large amount of leather [] or fruit ordered []. Yet everyone knew that in the Soviet Union grapes could be purchased during only two weeks out of the year and apples during only six weeks of the year, and then only in Moscow. The provinces received nothing. When choice items finally arrived in a government store, the director of the store would call his friends, who would buy everything first and leave nothing for the public.

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11. Another example of the use of rumors is that, when the Soviet Government lacks ready cash for its budget, a rumor is circulated that a new monetary system is in process of being formed. Remembering the last reform and the losses suffered because people kept their money in their mattresses, the public rushes to the banks to deposit its money. When all the money has been drained, the Government publishes an article condemning someone for a false rumor. As an illustration of the falsification which the Government practices, there is a story about a plant, imeni Kalibra, which had a photograph of a large crowd around a desk with the caption that another bond issue was in full swing and that the people were enthusiastically supporting the drive.² [] this was a photograph of the counter where [] sold sausages that day.

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12. For these reasons [] not believe that the propaganda will have an appreciable effect upon the people or upon the MGB. [] at the present time unauthorized methods of operation by the MGB have been stopped. Yet rules have always existed which forbade the use of physical torture. No single chief had ever given sanction to the torture of prisoners, but no one has ever said anything against it when it was used. MGB investigators were considered good only when they obtained results and confessions. For example, if an investigator had a prisoner who claimed no guilt and the investigator reported this to his superior, he would be told that he was a poor investigator and did not know how to handle the affair. Naturally, the investigator would begin to apply more pressure on the prisoner to obtain more results. The superior would use this as an object lesson, saying: "See, you are learning more", and so more pressure would be applied and a confession finally obtained.
13. After 1946 Beriya had absolutely no control over the MGB. Often his former associates would come to him and discuss their problems and operations and only thus might he have been able to influence the workings of the MGB. Malenkov has known for twenty years that torture was used and is being used in the USSR. For propaganda purposes, the Government needed a scapegoat and found him in Beriya. But no released inmate from a Soviet prison would ever admit that he was mistreated while he was in jail; for, if he did, it would be "curtains" for him.
14. Abakumov's trial and execution are not related to the doctor's plot. If they were, Abakumov and Leonov should have been released. Abakumov had been arrested originally because he would not arrest the doctors. Ryumin was arrested and shot because he did arrest the doctors. [] the doctors' episode is a closed chapter. The Politburo considers it a mistake to have published all of the happenings, and any similar episodes in the future will be undertaken with great secrecy.
15. Abakumov's trial and execution were not publicized to justify the action taken in the "Leningrad Case". Aside from high Party and MGB members in Moscow and Leningrad, not enough persons knew anything about the affair. No one in the provinces knew anything about it. Since the Soviet people in general would be unable to understand the reference, it would require a great deal of explaining. No one who knew of it would attempt to explain it to others for fear that he would be accused of improper interpretation.

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Comments

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1. There has not been a separate state security apparatus for the RSFSR; its functions are handled by the state security organ of the USSR through a

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plenipotentiary. At present, the title of this official would be Plenipotentiary of the KGB for the RSFSR.

2. There is a Kalibr Instrument Factory in Moscow.

3. [redacted] the term MGB to cover those functions performed by the MGB prior to March 1953, when the MGB and the MVD were merged. It is believed that these functions are now exercised by the KGB. Similarly, [redacted] Politburo throughout [redacted] is referring to events after the 19th Party Congress, Praesidium would be correct.

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